

DUTIES

Serves as a Veterinary Medical Officer (VMO) with geographic responsibility for the full range of disease diagnosis, control, and eradication and animal health and care activities within counties and states. May serve on details to both foreign and domestic locations to perform similar duties. Assignments involve (1) planning, coordinating, adapting, and modifying medical and program procedures to deal with animals, aquatic species, birds, and poultry infected with or exposed to contagious diseases; (2) developing and recommending new procedures and practices for properly releasing, retaining, or quarantining problem animals; (3) inspecting and examining animals, aquatic species, birds, and poultry for evidence of persistent or recurrent disease conditions and for the probable causes and effects; (4) diagnosing the clinical symptoms of suspect herds and flocks to identify the specific disease, advising producer to seek treatment of diseased animals, and recommending preventive care that can be taken; and (5) certifying the health of livestock, poultry, aquatic species, and their by-products to be exported to other countries. Typical duties of the Veterinary Medical Officer include:

Conducting evaluations of animal health program operations that are experiencing herd or flock disease problems to determine the solutions needed in the form of veterinary medical or program procedural adjustments or modifications.

Following up with site visits to ensure that accredited and state veterinarians observe the propriety of the certification of the health status of animals, aquatic species, birds, and poultry destined for intrastate, interstate or international shipments.

Reviewing the health status and disease potential of animals, aquatic species, birds, or poultry, and their products and by-products to be exported from or imported into the United States and determining final exit/entry status of animals or products.

Conducting licensing inspection and monitoring surveillance systems of establishments involved in handling restricted animals, birds, valuable breeding stock, zoo animals, exotic birds, and products such as hides, feathers, and trophies, vectors and organisms.

Analyzing veterinary medical and technical data from field investigations, laboratory tests, and pathological examinations and correlating the data with contributing factors such as farm management, environment, wildlife, immunization, or animal purchase and movement and health history for contributing factors leading to the outbreak or spread of the disease (epidemiological studies/investigations). Participating in animal health surveillance.

Applying recognized procedures in diagnosing a variety of domestic and foreign animal and poultry and aquatic diseases, especially those of significant economic importance that Agency policy has determined necessary to prevent, control or eradicate.

Inspecting livestock markets, vehicles, and abattoirs primarily for the effectiveness of disease prevention and control procedures in order to ensure that program requirements are being met.

Developing written reports or summaries of disease control and eradication and animal health activities.

Representing the Agency before public and private livestock groups and individuals for the purpose of promoting Veterinary Services programs in disease prevention, control, and eradication, and veterinary biologics.

May serve on an emergency disease eradication task force which has responsibility for instituting immediate quarantines, diagnostic controls, and eradication measures to effectively localize the epidemic.

May perform duties related to enforcement of veterinary biologics regulations within assigned section.

May supervise Animal Health Technicians and/or lower graded Veterinary Medical Officers assigned to the section. Serves as Acting Area Veterinarian in Charge (AVIC) when needed. This may include planning and organizing work, assigning duties, approving leave, training employees, evaluating performance, resolving complaints and grievances, initiating disciplinary actions, and other similar functions.

KNOWLEDGE REQUIRED BY THE POSITION

Professional knowledge is required in veterinary medical concepts, principles, and practices applicable to the full range of disease diagnosis, control and eradication and health programs and activities for livestock, poultry, or other species of animals, birds, and aquatic species and their products and by-products destined for intrastate, interstate or international shipment. This includes the following:

Ability to apply standard veterinary medical and program practices, procedures, and techniques during the review and evaluation of problem animals, birds and poultry, aquatic species, livestock markets, truckers, rendering plants, research laboratories, abattoirs, and related factors such as farm management, animal husbandry, environment, wildlife, immunization, or animal purchase and movement, and health history which contribute to the cause of disease outbreak or spread.

Familiarity with appropriate sciences such as microbiology, epidemiology, parasitology, pathology, immunology, virology, toxicology, serology, or other sciences applicable to disease problems and prevention, control, or eradication programs.

Ability to translate veterinary medical, scientific, and regulatory information and terms into language easily understood by a variety of customer contacts, with varying degrees of awareness of agency objectives. This includes skill in both oral and written communication to explain and enforce agency regulation and policy.

General knowledge of the objectives of related agency programs in order to recognize cases requiring referral to these programs and to assist program representatives as appropriate.

Working knowledge of computer applications to assist in analysis and evaluation of data collected.

SUPERVISORY CONTROLS

The incumbent will be supervised by the Area Veterinarian in Charge (AVIC), who assigns the area of responsibility and, within that area, assigns program activities, which include epidemiological investigations of disease outbreaks of intrastate, interstate, or international importance. The incumbent consults with the AVIC to establish program objectives, policies, and work schedules on a variety of endemic and foreign animal diseases, especially those of a zoonotic, highly contagious, or economically important nature. The veterinarian independently initiates plans of action to resolve herd and/or stock health issues and problems and coordinates project activities with the AVIC, state cooperators, other health professionals, peers, subordinates, and industry stakeholders. The veterinarian ensures that actions initiated are carried to completion and are executed within appropriate, or previously agreed upon, time frames. Project results are reviewed for conformance to policy and adherence to program objectives.

GUIDELINES

Guidelines include program directives, regulations, state-federal memoranda of understanding, standard veterinary medical literature, precedents, and uniform methods and rules of disease eradication and control. The veterinarian independently selects, adapts, and applies veterinary medical and program guidelines using initiative and judgment to achieve success in preventing, controlling, and eradicating diseases of significant economical importance. Ingenuity, resourcefulness, and appropriate assessment are exercised by the veterinarian in developing and recommending veterinary medical and program guidance, reviewing and evaluating the effectiveness of disease prevention, control and eradication programs.

COMPLEXITY

Assignments involve varied veterinary medical and program features that include a range of unrelated, nationally-prescribed disease detection, prevention, control, and eradication systems and procedures pertinent to many different disease control and eradication and animal health activities in counties and/or states. The cause may be a previously unknown agent resulting from contributing factors such as farm management, environment, wildlife, immunization, or animal purchase and health history which are in a constant state of change. The veterinarian analyzes all data and correlates it with the contributory factors to determine the solutions needed which may in the form of new or adjusted/modified veterinary medical or program procedures. The veterinarian consults with specialists as situations dictate.

SCOPE AND EFFECT

The purpose of the position is to provide veterinary medical and program guidance on the application of nationally prescribed standards for herd or flock disease diagnosis, control, eradication, and animal health activities operating in the geographical area for which the veterinarian is responsible. The veterinarian is an authority on issues regarding the health status and disease potential of animals, birds, or aquatic species, and their products and by-products.

Development and/or recommendation of new veterinary medical or program procedures may significantly affect state-federal disease control programs nationwide.

PERSONAL CONTACTS

Contacts are with staff officials and professionals from federal, state, and local government agencies, and a variety of stakeholders in private industry, academia, public or private groups, as well as the general public, who are concerned with animal health and veterinary biologics.

PURPOSE OF CONTACTS

The purpose is to provide or obtain veterinary medical and program information concerning the effectiveness of animal health and disease diagnosis, control and eradication activities throughout counties and/or states. This includes coordinating work efforts to deal with contagious livestock disease, analyzing and correlating veterinary medical data and contributing factors leading to the cause of the disease outbreak or spread, reviewing and passing judgment on animal health status and disease potential. Taking into consideration differing viewpoints, the veterinarian promotes disease prevention, control, and eradication programs and persuades responsible persons or groups to observe the propriety of veterinary medical or program procedural adjustments/modifications and the certification of health status of animals, aquatic species, birds, and poultry destined for intrastate, interstate, or international movements.

PHYSICAL DEMANDS

The work involves strenuous physical demands to handle and restrain livestock, which includes defending against physical attack by confused or distressed livestock or similar size animals confined in cramped stalls or similar accommodations. There is also crouching during the examination of livestock, manual restraint of livestock, prolonged kneeling in areas of high animal concentration for collection of blood samples, climbing during inspection of livestock market facilities, vehicles, or abattoirs, and lifting during the transport and set up of portable cattle chutes.

WORK ENVIRONMENT

Personal safety and the safety of the animals are constant concerns. There is exposure to discomforts and disease conditions and agents, some of which are highly contagious, infectious, noxious, and communicable to humans. Special clothing, equipment, and other safeguards are required. The work environment is extremely variable. The veterinarian will encounter widely varying conditions on farms and ranches and may work in confinement units or livestock markets, where the work area may be very dusty and have extremely slippery surfaces, with temperatures ranging from very cold to very hot, with varying degrees of humidity, high levels of ammonia from feces, and excessively high pitched noises, e.g., squealing swine. Also requires working with toxic agents such as disinfectants.